RESOLUTION ADDRESSING THE CLOSURE OF UNITED STATES CITIZEN AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES (USCIS) OFFICES OUTSIDE THE U.S.

Sponsors: Carmelan Polce, Wayne Weightman, Will Bakker (pending), Julia Bryan (pending)

Whereas in March 2019 the Trump Administration announced, without warning even to USCIS staff, its intention to close all 22 international USCIS offices and transfer those duties, now performed by USCIS employees worldwide, to domestic offices and U.S. embassies and consulates;

Whereas USCIS officers are responsible for adjudicating a wide variety of petitions and applications filed internationally, providing information services, and issuing travel documents to people in a wide variety of circumstances;

Whereas the closure is expected to materially slow the processing of matters such as family visa applications, foreign adoptions and citizenship petitions from U.S. citizens living abroad and members of the military stationed abroad;

Whereas closing the USCIS offices would reassign about 70 staffers who solve a wide array of problems and provide valuable information services such as assisting those who lose their green card, aiding widows of U.S. citizens, helping members of the military obtain legal documents, providing expertise and advice to families going through the process of adopting internationally, investigating fraud in visa applications, providing technical immigration advice to other U.S. government officials, and, within its Refugee Asylum and International Operations division, processing refugee applications;

Whereas the Trump Administration has made no secret of its intention to limit both legal and illegal immigration and to end the policy that allows U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents to sponsor non-nuclear family members to immigrate to the U.S., known more recently in the pejorative as “chain migration” and implement a policy of “merit-based” immigration;

Whereas the closure of immigration offices abroad will discourage and thwart immigration applicants by adding considerable time to what are already lengthy wait times for application processing, eliminating processing in foreign languages and removing services that handle emergency applications;

Whereas the practical impact of the policy is that it will separate multi-national families making application to immigrate to the U.S.;

Whereas the naturalization application backlog stood at 738,148 cases on September 30, 2018, a 16% increase over the level just before Trump took office;

Whereas immigration lawyers say the Trump administration has delayed application processing and heightened scrutiny of applications that used to clear quickly, preventing foreigners from being able to work, study and join their families in the U.S.;

Whereas the Trump Administration claims this is a cost-cutting exercise although USCIS's funding comes primarily from fees paid by people who use its services;

Whereas the policy is part of a greater isolationist endeavor by the Trump administration, withdrawing engagement in international institutions and pulling back U.S. international presence generally;

Whereas the work of the USCIS officers is expected to be taken over by State Department officials in U.S. embassies and consulates, though their consent to take over these duties has not yet been obtained;

Whereas the DPCA passed a resolution on October 16, 2011 supporting the reinstatement of the servicing of I-130 immigrant visa applications for non-U.S. family members at USCIS offices that references the particular concerns of Democrats Abroad with regards to family separation during immigration application processing and the right to freedom of movement generally;

Be it resolved that Democrats Abroad supports a policy that:

* enables direct consular filing globally of all applications normally filed with USCIS that are clearly approvable, reverting to the process for Form I-130 (Petition for Alien Relative) applications that was in place prior to 2011; and further
* moves Form I-407 Greencard abandonment filings, which are critically important to non-U.S. spouses of U.S. citizens seeking U.S. travel visas and needing to demonstrate nonimmigrant intent, to consular officials and impose a fee for applications which are currently fee-free and so handled negligently.

INTERNATIONAL USCIS OFFICES

[**Latin America, Canada and the Caribbean (LACC) District**](https://www.uscis.gov/node/44520)

* [Dominican Republic - Santo Domingo Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/44172)
* [El Salvador - San Salvador Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/44668)
* [Guatemala - Guatemala City Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/44812)
* [Haiti - Port-au-Prince Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/47748)
* [Mexico - Ciudad Juarez Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/45642)
* [Mexico - Mexico City Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/45610)
* [Mexico - Monterrey Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/44133)
* [Peru - Lima Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/44846)

[**Asia/Pacific (APAC) District**](https://www.uscis.gov/node/44631)

* [China - Beijing Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/43780)
* [China - Guangzhou Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/43908)
* [India - New Delhi Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/43404)
* [Philippines - Manila Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/44437)
* [South Korea - Seoul Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/44104)
* [Thailand - Bangkok Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/45712)

[**Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) District**](https://www.uscis.gov/node/45285)

* [Germany - Frankfurt Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/43357)
* [Ghana - Accra Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/44197)
* [Greece - Athens Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/43997)
* [Italy - Rome Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/44534)
* [Jordan - Amman Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/45962)
* [Kenya - Nairobi Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/45569)
* [Russia - Moscow Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/43522) (**Closed**)
* [South Africa - Johannesburg Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/43356)
* [United Kingdom - London Field Office](https://www.uscis.gov/node/43594)

Applications commonly filed abroad:

* [I-212, Application for Permission to Reapply for Admission into the United States After Deportation or Removal](https://www.uscis.gov/i-212) for persons who need to obtain consent to reapply for admission to the United States (consent to reapply) after being deported, removed or voluntarily leaving the United States without having a deportation order.
* [Form I-130, Petition for Alien Relative](https://www.uscis.gov/i-130)for citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States to establish the relationship to certain foreign relatives who wish to immigrate to the United States.
* [Form I-131, Application for Travel Document](https://www.uscis.gov/i-131) for certain eligible individuals who lack the documentation required to apply for admission at a U.S. port-of-entry or demonstrate their status as a lawful permanent resident.
* [Form I-131A, Application for Travel Document (Carrier Documentation)](https://www.uscis.gov/i-131a) to allow lawful permanent residents who do not have a Green Card or Reentry permit to apply for a travel document (carrier documentation) that permits a transportation carrier to allow them to board a flight or vessel to the United States without penalty.
* [Form I-360, Petition for Amerasian, Widow(er), or Special Immigrant](https://www.uscis.gov/i-360) to apply for certain benefits granted to various special categories of individuals eligible for immigration.
* Form I-590, Registration for Classification as Refugee for individuals who have been persecuted or fear persecution and are seeking resettlement protection in the United States.
* [Form I-600A, Application for Advance Processing of Orphan Petition](https://www.uscis.gov/i-600a)for prospective adoptive parents to establish qualifications for inter-country adoption.
* [Form I-600, Petition to Classify Orphan as an Immediate Relative](https://www.uscis.gov/i-600) for U.S. citizens to request orphan classification for a child who either is or will be adopted by a U.S. citizen to allow the child to enter the United States.
* [Form I-601, Application for Waiver of Ground of Inadmissibility](https://www.uscis.gov/i-601) for individuals who are otherwise approved to immigrate to the United States, but are ineligible to enter the United States due to applicability of one or more grounds of inadmissibility.
* [Form I-730, Refugee/Asylee Family Petition](https://www.uscis.gov/i-730) for individuals admitted to the U.S. as refugees or granted status as asylees within the past two years, to request follow-to-join benefits for a spouse and/or children.
* [Form N-400, Application for Naturalization](https://www.uscis.gov/n-400)for members of the U.S. military and their qualified family members deployed abroad seeking to naturalize to become U.S. citizens.
* Requests for Reconsideration (RFR) filed by individuals denied requests to be resettled in the U.S. as refugees.

**Resolution concerning changes to Form I-130 in the immigration process for family members of US citizens living abroad -** *adopted by the DPCA October 16, 2011*

Proposed by Peter Alegi (Italy), Wayne Weightman (Cambodia), Katie Solon (Austria), Gary

Suwannarat (Indonesia) and Meredith Wheeler (France). Co-sponsored by Carmelan Polce

(Australia), Connie Borde (France), Merrill Oates (Hungary) Dave van Rooy (Indonesia),

Kass Corbelli (Italy), Albert Kang (ROK), Peter du Pont (Thailand), and Reno Domenico

(Ukraine).

WHEREAS protecting the rights and promoting the interests of American citizens residing

abroad has from our founding been one of the principal purposes of Democrats Abroad;

WHEREAS Democrats Abroad continues to represent such citizens to the American

government, including Congressional and administrative levels, in particular by furnishing

information on the concerns of its overseas constituency;

WHEREAS a change has been established, without adequate examination of those concerns,

by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service and the Department of State in the

procedure for obtaining immigrant visas (Form I-130) for close relatives, eliminating the

jurisdiction of the Department of State to receive and to process applications as well as other

changes, for the reported purpose of preserving the financial claim of one federal agency;

WHEREAS the new procedure by requiring multiple mailings of the visa application and

supporting documents to the US will significantly and adversely affect overseas citizens by

seriously delaying the processing and granting of visas, resulting in separation of many

families as one spouse is required to return to the United States for any one of many serious

reasons without the other who is awaiting a visa;

WHEREAS the new rule will also adversely impact the ability for citizens to visit the US

with their spouse and children due to the suspicion that they may be attempting to circumvent

the long wait times inherent in the new process;

WHEREAS such separation is not in keeping with President Obama’s 2008 campaign

statement “Supporting Americans Living Abroad” which states his commitment to addressing

issues related to immigration of family members;

WHEREAS the Platform of Democrats Abroad calls for simplifying and expediting visa and

immigration processes for the immediate family of American citizens living abroad;

WHEREAS the effect of the new rule is a restriction of the citizen’s right to freedom of

movement;

WHEREAS the adoption of the changes occurred with no examination of the actual

circumstances of the citizens residing overseas who would be impacted;

WHEREAS Democrats Abroad must act in fulfillment of its duty to guard the interests of

citizens resident abroad, and wishes to assist the government with detailed and accurate

information on this matter;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Democrats Abroad continues to seek the retraction of the changed

rule and reinstallation of the former one, by all legitimate means, including provision of

information to American citizens, contacting the agencies concerned, alerting members of the

House and Senate and otherwise vigorously advocating the withdrawal of the rule.